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AUTHOR	Rude, Harvey; Stockhouse, Judy; Read, Jo Smith; Street, Steve; Murray, Karl
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ABSTRACT

The Professional Development Leadership Academy supports states in transforming systems of professional development. This paper investigates accountability considerations that are necessary to determine the impact and results of professional development from a state systems perspective. The five areas of focus that comprise the Academy knowledge base include strategic thinking, leadership development involving state and local educational teams, organizational change, collaborative partnerships, and systems of accountability. Each state team that participates in the Academy is expected to develop a system of accountability that provides evidence of success and impact regarding professional development. The Academy has identified four complementary tools that have the potential to bridge the gulf between professional development and learner outcomes. These tools are: (1) a professional development curriculum for stakeholders responsible for the success of state professional development systems; (2) logic models of planned change that link resources, activities, and customers with short-, intermediate-, and longer-term outcomes; (3) balanced systems of accountability that ensure sufficient attention to educational equity, student achievement, and system outcomes; and (4) quality performance and results measures. (Contains 24 references.) (SV)

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Harvey Rude
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, Colorado

Judy Stockhouse
Centennial Board of Cooperative Educational Services
Longmont, Colorado

Jo Smith Read
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

Steve Street
University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, North Dakota

Karl Murray
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
Alexandria, Virginia

LEADERSHIP IN ACCOUNTABILITY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS

The Professional Development Leadership Academy is a project of national significance that supports states in transforming systems of professional development. The Academy complements the current policy focus on educational reform, with attention to higher standards and expectations for all learners, that has provoked significant controversy concerning systematic support for educators (Fowler, 2000; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1999; Ohanian, 2000). The call for educational systems to provide a talented, dedicated, well-prepared teacher for every learner poses a challenge for the ongoing professional development of educators. The concept of the Professional Development Leadership Academy develops leadership within participating states that have the commitment and talent to transform their system of professional development. This paper investigates accountability considerations that are necessary to determine the impact and results of professional development from a state systems perspective.

Content of the Academy

The knowledge base that supports the Professional Development Leadership Academy has evolved from two previous national projects of the National Institute on Comprehensive Systems of Personnel Development Collaboration (Council for Exceptional Children, 1998). The five areas of focus that comprise the Academy knowledge base include strategic thinking, leadership, organizational change, collaborative partnerships, and systems of accountability. A brief description of each area includes the following:

--Strategic thinking is the prerequisite to strategic planning and strategic action. Strategic thinking is a learned skill that considers new options for thinking beyond current issues and concerns of individuals and the organizations they serve (Bemowski, 1996; Scully, 1996; Uhlfelder, 1997).

--The purpose of leadership focus is to facilitate a system of leadership development that involves educational teams at the state, local, and higher education levels in developing new and enhanced knowledge, skills, and dispositions. These key leaders contribute as dynamic agents for systems change in professional development (Badaracco & Ellsworth, 1989; Quinn, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1999).

--Organizational change is concerned with empowering all levels of education practitioners to explore and identify change strategies. Change strategies result in enhanced systems thinking for the creation of learning communities (Covey, 1991; Horsley & Kaser, 1999).

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--Collaborative partnerships depend on the right balance of leadership, support, resources, people, and action plans (Corcoran, 1995; Karasoff, 1998).

--Systems of accountability promote the shared responsibility between general and special educators for a balanced system of accountability including input/process accountability, individual student learning/results accountability, and system/outcome level accountability (Guskey, 1995; Sparks, 1995; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1996).

Three additional elements have been identified by the Academy to support the professional development curriculum, training, and project purpose. These include: technical assistance support; capacity building through the identification, development and support of state identified Project Associates; and, state systems of accountability for professional development that provide evidence of impact.

Technical assistance is provided through a detailed work plan that supports the content of the Academy's professional development curriculum within the context of the participating states' needs. A contract that specifies the types of support and activities that will be delivered is developed between the state education agency and project staff. Accountability for technical assistance, a shared responsibility between the participating agencies, guides the purpose and intended outcomes of the project's technical assistance providers.

Capacity building is accomplished through a variety of integrated strategies, the most notable being the development of Project Associates. Project Associates emerge from among the membership of the state leadership team for professional development systems. Individuals who are identified for this role within their state system have unique responsibilities for providing communication, coordination, and leadership to the state's long term efforts. A key expectation for Project Associates is to gain mastery level of performance on the five areas of Academy curriculum.

The unique nature of state education agencies and the system of public education provided within their discrete borders provides an expectation for individualized approaches to accountability for professional development. Each state team that participates in the Academy is expected to develop a system of accountability that provides evidence of success and impact regarding professional development.

Logic Models of Planned Change

Professional development is sometimes implemented with little attention to the impact or intended outcome of the enterprise. Frequently the most telling measures of professional development program impact become inconsequential process measures such as the following: consumer enjoyment of the experiences and activities provided; environmental factors such as room temperature and the comfort of the participants' work space; and unrelated factors including the quality of food and drink provided during the course of the professional development experiences. This reliance on process measures has very little to do with connecting the value of professional development with outcomes for educators and the students being educated. In response to this common dilemma, advocates of accountability have advanced clear methods for describing and evaluating programs in new ways. Logic models of planned change represent logical linkages among program resources, activities, outputs, customers reached, and short, intermediate, and longer term outcomes (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999).

While the terms employed to describe the logic model framework are varied (see Teather & Montague, 1997; Patton, 1997; Montague, 1997;) the basic intent of this approach is to clearly identify stakeholder perceptions of how a program will work. The process of constructing a logic model entails the following five steps: (1) collecting the relevant information; (2) clearly defining the problem and its context; (3) defining the elements of the logic model; (4) drawing the logic model; and, (5) verifying the logic model with stakeholders. Each of these important steps seeks to answer the critical question: "What are we trying to achieve with our professional development system and why is it important?"

The Professional Development Leadership Academy has identified seven major categories of information that are tracked within the project accountability design. These include:

--(a) resources/inputs or what the Academy intends to do with its resources;
--(b) activities includes those steps that are required to achieve the project outputs;
--(c) customers reached which describes the clients or consumers of the Academy activities;
--(d) outputs or the short term outcomes of the project process;
--(e) intermediate outcomes which identify how services and systems change as a result of the short term outcomes;
--(f) long term outcome or the Academy vision of changes for children; and,
--(g) external forces describing those contextual factors, not under the control of the Academy project, that could influence its success either positively or negatively. A description of how these elements are interrelated is found in Figure One which provides the proposed logic for the Professional Development Leadership Academy.

The connections that have been established among two week-long training sessions on the Academy curriculum for cohort team members who will develop new knowledge, attitudes, and skills, result in inter-related and accountable systems of professional development. The enhanced systems lead to the preparation and support of fully qualified and quality educators that provide enhanced school opportunities for success and lead to the Academy vision of greater results for all children. The identification of key external forces throughout the implementation process defines an effective logic model of planned change in professional development.

Considerations in Balanced Accountability

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (1997) identified a dynamic model of accountability that considered the need to balance the concerns for input/process accountability, student learning outcome accountability, and system standards accountability. The Academy has based its evaluation framework on these components that lead to a vision of balanced accountability, represent an educational system, and ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, benefit from their educational experience. Benefits are measured through determinations of equal access, high standards, and high expectations resulting in caring, productive, and socially involved citizens.

The historical roots of the balanced accountability model are drawn from the Institute of Cultural Affairs of Chicago (1970) which views social process in terms of three fundamental components including economical/foundational aspects, political/organizational aspects, and cultural/meaning giving aspects. Ideally, each of the three components is robust and provides a unique contribution to the balance of an inter-related system. Frequently a relative imbalance will occur which allows one of these aspects to function as a tyrant undermining the balance of the other two. In the remaining two aspects of the model, one factor assumes an ally position in support of the tyrant and the other has the potential to collapse from neglect. For example, many Native American Nations have adopted organized gambling to address the economic/foundational aspect of their identity. The ally in this equation frequently becomes the governmental rules and regulations in support of the gaming industry from a political/organizational perspective. The potential for collapse is felt by the cultural/meaning giving aspect of the tribal government that provides the official sanction to these activities. When the economic tyrant pairs with a political ally, the culture and language of the tribe is lost as a result.

Another example of the delicate balance that is easily lost in questions of social balance is provided by the religious sect known as the Shakers. Shakers have adopted a set of cultural/meaning giving imperatives that forbid procreation among its members. When the cultural tyrant is paired with the political ally, the economical foundation of the society collapses since the culture is unable to sustain itself over time.

The Academy asks state professional development systems to focus on the ideal balance of educational equity, individual student achievement for all learners, and program effectiveness at the system level. The

mandates of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 105-17) have resulted in an over-reliance on input/process accountability, with varying degrees of collapse in the success with individual student learning outcomes and system level outcomes of educational success.

Quality Performance and Results Measures

Balanced systems of accountability emphasize inputs and process in equal measure with the more difficult accountability concepts of individual learning outcomes and systems standards outcomes. One of the stumbling blocks to achieving this desirable balance is the lack of common language with which to describe a desired level of outcome in terms that are consistent and contribute to general understanding among the customers and providers of professional development. Friedman (1999) identified four essential questions of accountability that provide guidance in the area as follows: (1) What do we want for our children and families? (this identifies the desired **results**); (2) How do we know if we have achieved the results we want? (this suggests the types of **indicators** of effectiveness we are willing to accept); (3) What works to achieve the outcomes we want? (this delineates the **strategies** that lead to the desired indicators and results); and, (4) How do we know the elements of our strategy are performing as well as possible? (these provide a description of the qualitative change outcomes that become our **performance measures**).

The difference between results and performance measures is significant. Results measures are much broader in scope, and speak to the broad range of factors that are producing the results, indicators, and strategies that lead to the current situation in professional development. From a logic model perspective (McLauglin & Jordan, 1999), results measures are the result of a variety of factors. Many of the causal factors are beyond the scope of project influence and accountability. Performance measures, by contrast, provide measures of program effectiveness for which the professional development system architects are the principal owners. Performance accountability focuses primarily on the relationship between strategies and performance measures in professional development. In essence, the specification of performance measures answers the question: "What change did we produce, and how well did we do it?" The types of information that provide evidence of effectiveness would include cost/benefit analyses, computation of return on investment, and customer results/outcomes. Friedman (1999) stresses the critical need to establish baseline information regarding quality performance measures. To establish the compelling case for change, it is essential to think about the story behind the baseline and what can be done to improve upon existing performance.

Summary

The accountability link between professional development and increased results for all learners requires the use of new tools that have the potential to support viable systems of accountability. The Professional Development Leadership Academy has identified four complementary tools that have the potential to bridge the gulf between professional development and learner result. These tools include: the specification and delivery of a professional development curriculum for stakeholders entrusted with the future success of state systems of professional development; the development and implementation of logic models of planned change that links resources, activities, and customers with short, intermediate, and longer term outcomes; the implementation of balanced systems of accountability that insure sufficient attention to educational equity, student achievement, and system outcomes; and the specification of quality performance and results measures, including the context for applying each to educational accountability questions. These promising tools become little more than academic exercises without the commitment of strong and visionary leadership with the willingness to incorporate these elements into the fabric of a state system of accountability for professional development.

A state system of professional development addresses the needs of all stakeholders ranging from the most populated and urban environments to the most isolated and rural communities. Professional development systems must pay attention to all elements of the system which encompasses the pre-service preparation of aspiring educators at the higher education levels of impact to the continuing education concerns of the most experienced

and skillful practitioners in the field. Special education and general education concerns must be blended into a single system that includes the interests of all learners, including the most difficult to serve.

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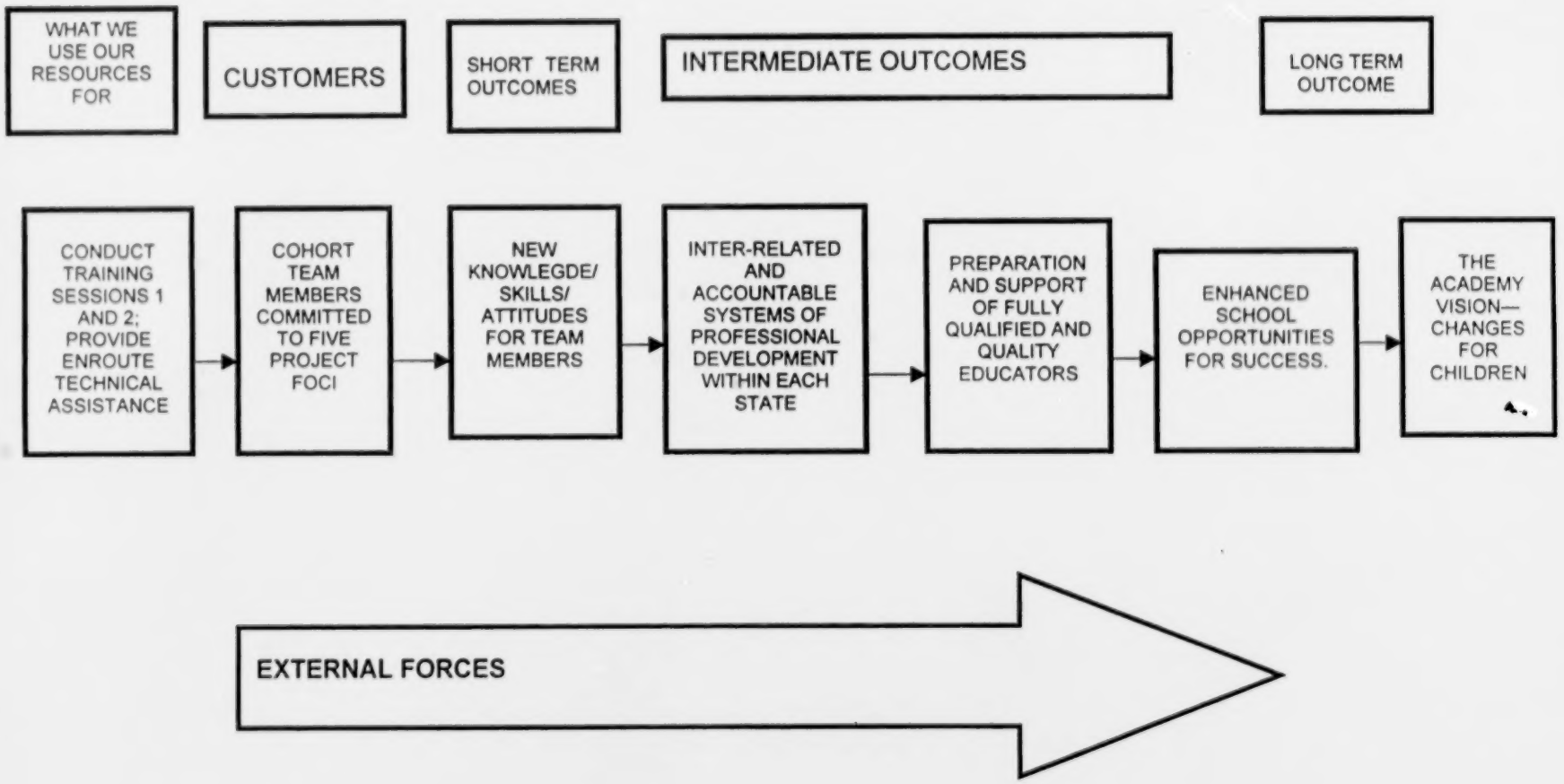
Figure One: PROPOSED LOGIC
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY


WHAT WE USE OUR RESOURCES FOR
CUSTOMERS
SHORT TERM OUTCOMES
INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES
LONG TERM OUTCOME
CONDUCT TRAINING SESSIONS 1 AND 2; PROVIDE ENROUTE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
COHORT TEAM MEMBERS COMMITTED TO FIVE PROJECT FOCI
NEW KNOWLEGDE/ SKILLS/ ATTITUDES FOR TEAM MEMBERS
INTER-RELATED AND ACCOUNTABLE SYSTEMS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN EACH STATE
PREPARATION AND SUPPORT OF FULLY QUALIFIED AND QUALITY EDUCATORS
ENHANCED SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS.
THE ACADEMY VISION— CHANGES FOR CHILDREN
EXTERNAL FORCES